

DOCUMENTATION OF JEWISH RECORDS CANADA



The records of Jewish lives in Canada are written in English, French, Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian, and more. DoJR-Canada's JCat will discover and catalogue them all.



The 4th largest Jewish community in the world, Canada holds a treasure trove of historical records to share with its 400,000 Jews, as well as Jews throughout the Diaspora who are descended from Canadian Jews. DoJR-Canada's JCat makes them readily discoverable.



Often the most vulnerable and information-rich records of Jewish lives are in attics and trunks across Canada.

Canada's Rich Jewish History

For more than 10 generations, Jews have left their legacy in Canada. The memories of Canadian Jews are both a collective heritage as well as a personal legacy and family history for hundreds of thousands of their descendants.

The lives of the first settlers in the early 1760s – the David, Franks, Hart, Jacobs, and Joseph families – and many prominent leaders starting with Ezekiel Hart, the first Jew elected to the Canadian parliament (1808), may be discovered in the holdings of Canada's archives and libraries.

All descendants of Canadian Jews – Ashkenazic, Sephardic, Mizrahi, Ethiopian – have a right to discover, learn, and remember those who came before them. The documentation of our ancestors' lives has survived, but is not readily discoverable and, in cases, is vulnerable to the ravages of time and man-made and environmental destruction.

Documentation of Jewish Records Canada (DoJR-Canada) is launching a big, bold, and urgent first-of-its-kind nationwide survey and cataloguing project to produce a freely searchable catalogue, JCat, so that everyone can discover their Jewish ancestors and, through the records of their past, learn the trials, tragedies, and triumphs in the journeys of their lives.

Discovery Across Canada

Documentation of Jewish lives exists in all 10 provinces and in the three northern territories – captured in records kept by government (federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal), NGOs, religious and community organizations, and individuals in their trunks and attics. Starting with a pilot project in 2025 and rolling out across the nation, DoJR-Canada is a systematic and most comprehensive project to reclaim our past, rebuild our memories, and preserve it for future generations.

International Scope

The DoJR-Canada project will be locally led with the support of the L'Dor V'Dor Foundation ([LDVDF](#)) as a key part of its [DoJR](#) global project to discover and catalogue historical records of Jewish lives throughout the Diaspora. LDVDF operates with the support of the National Library of Israel and the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

Canada's Lead Has Global Impact

DoJR-Canada will be a role model for other nationwide surveys enabling discovery of ancestral lives. This knowledge informs one's identity and strengthens connection to the Jewish community – for resilience in the face of life's difficulties and anti-Semitism.

Building Support

DoJR-Canada seeks support from founding donors: \$100,000 for capacity building by year-end 2024 and \$7.5M by year-end 2027.

FAQs

Where (and When) Will the Project Start?

Once capacity building funds are raised, the pilot project will begin. Our capacity building campaign goal is \$100,000 by year end 2024.

When Will the Project Be Completed?

The DoJR–Canada project will be ongoing as long as there are records to be discovered. It is planned that the first public access of JCat, to search a substantial number of historical record collections, will be available within three years of the project start.

How Many Facilities Will Be Surveyed?

Hundreds of facilities will be surveyed within the 10 provinces and in the three northern territories, including government offices (federal, provincial or territorial, and municipal); Jewish and non-Jewish archives, libraries, museums, and historical societies at the national, regional, and local levels, and Jewish religious and community organizations, schools and universities, and cemeteries.

What Strategy Will Be Used for Systematic and Comprehensive Discovery?

The DoJR worldwide project has developed a list of the types of organizations that typically hold Jewish historical records and the 350+ types of records that document Jewish lives. The lists will guide where to look and what to look for.

Two early phases of work will inform the full project implementation: a pilot project and a records-at-risk survey. The pilot project will be conducted with limited scope to perform an initial survey whose purpose is to improve the repeatability of the survey process within Canada's unique circumstance. The records-at-risk survey will be a high level and broad survey sampling all the types and regions of custodial records keepers across Canada. The purpose of the records-at-risk survey is to understand the landscape of facilities, their general circumstance regarding vulnerabilities of their holdings, the degree to which their holdings are documented, and a scoping of the number, size, and complexity of facilities to be surveyed in detail.

In addition to surveys being conducted by expert consultants and volunteers, where catalogues or record collections are digitally available, digital methods will be used to filter and ingest relevant information into JCat.

These two early phases of work will enable the prioritization and scheduling of the full project implementation. Additionally, a public outreach program will encourage individuals to locate and share their holdings from their attics and trunks.

Where Is the Website for DoJR – Canada?

Capacity building funding will enable the development of the DoJR-Canada website at dojr.ca and JewishRecords.ca.

How Will the Funds Be Used?

\$100,000 in capacity building funds will be used to establish the non-profit DoJR-Canada and its infrastructure to launch the three-year \$7.5M campaign to build DoJR-Canada JCat. The three year campaign will fund researchers/surveyors for data acquisition and software and database development with less than 20% general operations, administration, and fundraising expenses.

How Will the Project Be Managed?

The project will be managed by the CEO of DoJR-Canada under the direction of its board of directors and in consultation with its advisory council, as a Canadian subsidiary of the L'Dor V'Dor Foundation and its Documentation of Jewish Records Worldwide project.

How Do I Access JCat?

JCat is currently not available for search. Within the upcoming months, JCat will become publicly available to search for Jewish Newspapers held in repositories worldwide.

How Do I Keep Informed About the Project?

Email development@ldvdf.org.